

## Electric Outage Service Credits— Surviving Power Outages



spotlight

Customers may be eligible for a credit on their electric bill if they experience lengthy or frequent service outages. The credit is in accordance with Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) rules for Service Quality and Reliability Standards. Residential customers may qualify for the \$25 credit. For commercial and other classes of service, the credit is determined based on a customer's minimum bill. To request an electric outage service credit, customers should contact their electric utilities.

There are three types of outage conditions that may qualify for a credit – **catastrophic condition outages**, **normal condition outages**, and **frequent outages**.

- **Credit Under Catastrophic Conditions (Rule 44)**

A customer is eligible for a credit under **catastrophic conditions** if the utility fails to restore service within **120 hours** after an outage resulting from catastrophic conditions. A catastrophic condition is defined as an event that results in an official state of emergency or an event resulting in an interruption for 10% or more of a utility's customers. Customers need to notify their electric utilities of the outage.

- **Credit Under Normal Conditions (Rule 45)**

A customer is eligible for a credit under **normal conditions** if the utility fails to restore service within **16 hours** after an outage resulting from conditions other than catastrophic conditions. Customers need to notify their electric utility of the outage.

- **Credit For Repetitive Interruptions (Rule 46)**

A customer is eligible for a credit for **repetitive interruptions** if experiencing **more than 7 interruptions in a 12 month period**. Customers need to notify their electric utility of service outages. The date and time of each outage should be noted in a log or written record. Additional notes should include: when the service was restored, the date and time the company was notified of the outage, and how the company was notified.

Eligible customers should contact their utility to request an electric outage service credit. Customers can contact the MPSC if a credit request is denied by the utility. Rules regarding outage service credits – and eligibility requirements – are presented in the MPSC's [Service Quality and Reliability Standards](#).



### **Prepare For A Power Outage Before It Happens**

1. Set aside and designate for emergency use:
  - Flashlights
  - A Battery-powered radio
  - Extra batteries
  - Candles
  - Blankets
  - A First-aid kit
  - Nonperishable foods
  - A Battery-operated lantern
  - Drinking water – (1 gallon per person per day)
  - Some emergency cash
2. Keep a list of emergency numbers near the telephone – including the number to the local electric company. Unless telephone lines are down, landline telephone service should remain available during an electrical power outage. Cellular service may not work if power to the cell tower system is disrupted.
3. Protect electrical items like TVs, VCRs, microwave ovens, and home computers with voltage surge suppressors. If these items are not protected, unplug them before a storm begins to prevent damage.

### **When Power is Lost**

- Check the fuse or breaker box to see if the outage is due to a blown fuse or tripped circuit breaker. Check with neighbors to see if their power is out.
- Call the local electric company to report the outage. Also, advise the company if there is emergency medical equipment in the home.
- Unplug most lights and appliances to prevent electrical overload when power is restored.
- Keep the refrigerator door closed as much as possible. Move milk, cheese, meats, etc. into the freezer compartment of the refrigerator. If the freezer is only partially full, group packages together so they form an “igloo” to keep each other cold. Cover the refrigerator and freezer with blankets to provide additional insulation. Consider placing dry ice in the freezer to help keep food frozen.
- Avoid downed power lines and immediately report the situation to the electric company or local law enforcement agency.

### **Additional Steps When Power is Lost and Outside Temperature is Cold**

If you have city-provided water, open faucets for a constant drip so pipes won't freeze.

Do not run a generator indoors.

If using a fireplace, make sure the damper is open for proper ventilation.

Store perishable foods outside in a cold and shaded area or in an unheated garage.

### **When Power is Restored**

Power levels can vary considerably when electricity is restored. Wait a few minutes before turning on lights and plug in appliances one at a time.